

EVERY WINTER

only some leaves at the far end of the field,
at the tops of some thin trees, yellow leaves,
like hundreds of miniature yellow flags on top
of flag poles that are crooked and waiting
for the worst. it's surprising there is even
one leaf left to be found on any tree, so reckless
has the wind come through the valley these
past nights of this past week. and, yes, the wind,
it seems to always choose night to go about making
its passage through these mountains.
just now i found myself standing by the stove,
after taking the kettle off to pour hot
water into my teacup, soaking up the
warmth of the still-glowing-orange electric
coil. every winter i swear that i won't
spend another winter in this place,
but without fail such thoughts evaporate
during the summer. i'll forget about
the hostile months of winter, relax into
another beautiful autumn, and
then suddenly it's as though my fingers
and toes were violently cut off and
thrown across the hard ground for
the crows to come and feed on.
even as i scribble here in my old
swollen notebook, i can hear rain
drumming at the back door,
cold rain which can age the face
perhaps more viciously
than the sun. last night
i heard myself sniffing in bed,
like some sad stupid man
who had just lost a faithful dog.
this morning when i came down
from the upstairs bedroom i saw deer
in the back field, and i was
shocked at how black they had turned.
and whether this was
for reasons of camouflage
or sheer anticipation
of death, i don't pretend
to know.